A Fabulous Friday!

On Friday, November 15th, St. James in Sault Ste. Marie, hosted a "Fabulous Friday" inter-generational gathering.

The evening featured a potluck supper, puppet making for an upcoming Christmas presentation by their young people, and some rowdy and rousing BINGO to round out the evening.

Pictured are two of the puppets (and their puppet masters!) that were constructed during the "Fabulous Friday" event.

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"Remembering God's Time During Our Time"

Advent is the first season of the church year, beginning with the fourth Sunday before Christmas and continuing through the day before Christmas. The name is derived from a Latin word for "coming." The season is a time of preparation and expectation for the coming celebration of our Lord's nativity, and for the final coming of Christ "in power and glory."

The following was written by Mary Frances Schjonberg for Nov. 30, 2013 and was taken from The Episcopal Church website resources.

How does your time look between now and Christmas? Is your calendar for the next four weeks a jumble of "musts"? There's shopping, wrapping, shipping, delivering. There are the Christmas cards. There's the tree to be bought, trimmed and watered every day. There's the outside decorating. There's whatever baking we might do. There's a "Messiah" concert and a family gathering. There's an Advent wreath-making dinner and a caroling party in two weeks. There's the school holiday program and the office Christmas party. Don't forget the gifts for the folks who help us get through: the person who cuts our hair, the letter carrier, in some places the doorman and the super. There are people to pick up the airport, perhaps. Maybe there are some December birthdays, for good measure. It's all there on your calendar, be it paper or digital, and it's all your time.

And then there's God's time. It's all contained within the circle of the Advent wreath, the wreath with the first candle lit this morning. It's the beginning of Advent, the beginning of the church year, that big wheel of time that every year turns us from the waiting of Advent to the joy of Christmas, to the waiting of Lent to the joy of Easter, to the waiting of Eastertide to the joy of Pentecost, to the joy of life in ordinary time and back again. So here is the span of God's time we enter. This candle marks the beginning of the time we will spend with the prophet Isaiah, that prophet from the Hebrew Scriptures known and trusted and quoted by the writers of the New Testament. The light of this candle infuses today's reading. Isaiah implores his listeners to walk in the light of the Lord into the kingdom where people do not learn how to make war but instead turn their energies toward cultivating the earth and not destroying it. Paul echoes Isaiah's vision when he urges his listeners to wake up, to leave the works of darkness and to put on the armor of light. Paul also echoes what he had heard that Jesus said to his disciples, the words that Matthew attributes to him: "Keep awake therefore." Next Sunday we will light the first and the second candles, and Isaiah will remind us what happens in the light: growth, a green shoot from a dead stump. Paul will remind us of Isaiah's prediction about that dead stump of David's line bearing new fruit in the person of Jesus. John the Baptist, the one Isaiah predicted would come, will appear in the blinding sunlight of the desert, telling us to prepare the way for the one who will use water and fire to make us his own. On the third Sunday when we light three candles, Isaiah will tell us about deserts that bloom, the blind who see and the lame who leap. James will remind us in his letter that it takes time for the earth to bloom. He will use the prophets as examples of those who waited patiently for their faith to bear fruit. Jesus will confirm John the Baptist's suspicions about him: indeed, he is the one whom Isaiah predicted. Through him the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the people hear the good news of the coming of the kingdom.

On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, four candles will burn in this wheel and the promises will soon be fulfilled. Isaiah will tell us about a young woman who will give birth to a son and name him Immanuel, "God with us." Matthew will set Jesus' birth to Mary and Joseph in the light of Isaiah's prediction. Paul will tell the Romans that Jesus fulfills everything the prophets promised.
Finally, we will light this central light and on Christmas morning we will hear John begin his gospel with those mysterious and powerful words: “What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all the people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ... And the Word became flesh and lived among us ... full of grace and truth.”

And so the circle of Advent time comes around again. But Advent is not a time when we go through the motions of remembering a story whose ending we already know. It’s worth remembering that we begin our journey around this wheel this morning with Jesus’ own prediction of how he will come to us again. Advent is about Jesus coming once and promising to come again. This time of Advent is about the light shining in the darkness but not obliterating the darkness. It is about the kingdom having already come near to us but not yet having been fulfilled. There is much work left to be done – and not just all we face these next four weeks. But you know what? Christmas always comes whether we get it all done – perfectly – or not. Will the kingdom come in a similar inevitable way? What will we have done to hasten its coming? Will we recognize it when it comes? Who are we? Which farmer in the field? Which woman grinding meal? Will we go about our pre-Christmas tasks, marking out our time, and forget about the Advent stories of God’s time? Or, perhaps, can we overlay these two arcs of time, taking good care of the tasks that will make for a special holiday season and staying awake for the signs of the kingdom – of God’s time – breaking into our time? Because it is not that we shouldn’t enjoy the hustle and bustle of the secular season of “X-number of days until Christmas” – even though some preachers are known to guilt us into thinking it is less-than-Christian to fall for this month’s commercialism.

Last year about this time, J Mary Luti who is a United Church of Christ pastor, wrote in her blog that she was "simply getting tired of listening to sermons in Advent that draw a sharp line between the bad world of getting and spending which barely acknowledges or even notices the reason for the season, and another good world in which none of that goes on and into which Jesus is born properly, cleanly, to the sound of angels singing, not cash registers ringing." That second world, she said, doesn’t exist. We only have one world – this world we live in, the one in which God finds us and loves us because of our longing for something beyond ourselves. Jesus never asked us not to be human, Luti pointed out. Jesus became human and came into the chaos of our world to show us how to navigate our way through it using love and compassion as our touchstones. In a book of prayerful poems called “Being Home,” Gunilla Norris strives to live in the overlap between our time and God’s time. She wants to be a steward of her everyday tasks in such a way that allows her not to despise the din of the world and its tasks, but to use them as a portal into deeper living. In a poem called “Polishing the Silver” she prays:

As I polish let me remember
the fleeting time that I am here.
Let me let go of all silver.
Let me enter this moment and polish it bright.
Let me not lose my life in any slavery –
from looking good
to preserving the past,
to whatever idolatry
that keeps me from just this –the grateful
receiving of the next thing at hand.
Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

Diocesan Christmas Party

The first annual (?) Diocesan Christmas Party is being planned for Thursday, December 12th from 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm at the Morgan Chapel of St. Paul's in Marquette.

Please make a plan to come out and enjoy some good food and friendship. And, if you would like to bring your famous Christmas treat to share, feel free! If you have questions, please call Kathy at 226-2912.

Breaking Bread

The next Breaking Bread will take place on Tuesday, December 3rd at Jack's Restaurant in Rapid River.

We begin at 6 pm followed by a conversation at 7 pm. If you plan to attend, just email diocese@upepiscopal.org or leave a message at 228-7160 with Jane so that we can have enough meals prepared for the evening.

Plan Your Getaway

If you are facing a hectic schedule this Thanksgiving to Christmastime and then hope to get caught up to start in January all reorganized - this retreat may be just the break you want!

The Women's Ministry Council has planned a spiritual retreat, Feb. 21-23, at the Old Dutch Mill/Rapid River Lodge. The lodge is located east of Escanaba, and near the town of Rapid River.

The retreat will be similar to those we have enjoyed for so many years at the Marygrove Retreat Center. It will be centered on our spirituality with talks and discussions led by Bonnie Nussbaum. There will be other activities available as well, but everyone is also free to design her own retreat: all participation is entirely voluntary.

As the pace of your life picks up over the holidays, bear in mind this chance to rest, relax, and recharge - a chance to "spa" out! Plan your escape.

More information and registration details for the retreat will be available in the upcoming weeks.

"The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.” –Mark Twain
The Benefits of Shopping Locally and More Sustainably
Submitted by Jacklyn Lenten

Many people like the idea of buying organic, locally sourced foods that are good for both our bodies and the planet. However, many people get overwhelmed by the options, the confusing labels, and the prices of these foods as we wander the aisles of our local grocery store. I would like to break down the impact your shopping has on the environment and our economy and explain the benefits of shopping locally and more sustainably.

Every time we make a purchase we are choosing to support the business or entrepreneur providing that good, whether we realize it or not, we are contributing to their success. But, not only are we saying we like their products, we are also saying we like the way they run their business, their core values, and their interactions with employees, farmers or livestock. That’s a lot of stuff to take into consideration every time we run to the gas station for a gallon of milk. To not overwhelm ourselves while trying to shop, we need to take into consideration our own values and maybe do some research on some of our "go-to brands" to make sure our values line up with the businesses we’re purchasing from. For example, you may want to support producers that are certified fair trade, or don’t test on animals, or are a part of the Rainforest Alliance, or you may only want to purchase non-GMO produce. These are just a few values that might resonate with you. There are countless others and there is no right or wrong. Figure out what brands align with your values and look out for that brand during your next shopping trip to minimize stress.

Next, I would like to highlight some of the benefits of buying locally sourced products. The Marquette Food Co-op usually has the largest selection of local products, ranging from produce and meat to soaps and candles, but most grocery stores in Marquette have local products on their shelves if you look closely. By purchasing from local vendors, your money is going to be reinvested in our local economy. These local vendors are our neighbors, they too buy groceries, pay taxes, put their kids through school, take their vehicles to the mechanic, and visit local doctors. The point is, this is a closed loop system in which you are contributing to a local vendor’s income that they they reinvest into the Marquette area instead of your money going to some multi-million dollar conglomerate based in South America. It’s a win-win situation for everyone involved.

If economics doesn’t interest you, consider the freshness and cleanliness of your food. Generally, local farmers don’t have the money or equipment to produce genetically modified fruits and vegetables protected by large amounts of pesticides and they don’t pump their livestock with antibiotics and hormones. By purchasing from local vendors, you can almost guarantee your food is free of harsh chemicals. Additionally, locally sourced foods don’t travel nearly as far. Both the Farmer’s Market and the Marquette Food Co-op make it possible to have produce on their shelves that was picked only hours before. It couldn’t be any fresher if you picked it from your own backyard. Think about how many hundreds of miles Florida oranges have to travel before getting to our grocery stores in the rural Upper Peninsula. The freshness of local produce can’t be beat and the planet will thank you for reducing travel-related emissions.

Although purchasing locally sourced foods can be a bit more expensive, there’s much more value behind your dollar and lots of variables worth considering. By purchasing locally, you’re investing in your local economy and your health and you’re purchasing the freshest products possible. Just a few thoughts to ponder before your next trip to the grocery store.
The Good Book Club

The last couple of years, Forward Movement has been bringing the Good Book Club to the Episcopal Church. For those who haven't tried it yet, the Good Book Club invites the whole church to read a book of the Bible together. In 2018, we read Luke and then Acts during Lent and Easter. In 2019, we read Romans during the Epiphany season. Starting January 6, 2020, Forward Movement and many other organizations are inviting you to read the Gospel of John during the Epiphany season, ending the day before Lent starts. If you've never read a book of the Bible straight through, you'll love doing this on your own and with others far and near.

Many organizations, including The Episcopal Church, Episcopal Relief & Development, Episcopal Church Foundation, Missional Voices, Forma, Grow Christians, and Episcopal Migration Ministries (among others!) are offering free resources for individual or group study. You'll find podcasts, lesson plans, blogs, graphics, and more. It's all on the Good Book Club website.

You can certainly read John on your own. I hope you'll think about inviting your whole congregation to join in. You can meet on Sundays to talk about the readings. You can read together and comment on the parish Facebook page. You can keep a local blog. There are as many ways to take part in the Good Book Club as there are people. The reason to do this is simple: reading scripture changes us. When we step back and see the big picture--reading a whole book--we see God's love for us a bit differently than we might if our usual encounter is tiny snippets of scripture when we come to church. Reading the whole Bible changed my life, and it started for me one book at a time. I think it might change you, too.

Scott Gunn, Executive Director
Forward Movement

Million Dollar Match Campaign

Episcopal Relief and Development is kicking off its annual holiday Million Dollar Match campaign which will run until December 31, 2019. It is offering supporters and donors the opportunity to double their impact with a donation. Thanks to a generous group of donors, for the second year in a row, contributions that Episcopal Relief and Development received between now and the end of the year will be doubled, dollar for dollar, up to a total of $1 million.

Talks@GS
an interview with Presiding Bishop Michael Curry

Earlier in November, Presiding Bishop Curry was the featured guest on Talk@GS a live interview program where Goldman Sachs convenes leading thinkers to share insights and ideas shaping the world. Click here to see the interview.

"It is now, at Advent, that I am given the chance to suspend all expectation...and instead to revel in the mystery."

— Jerusalem Jackson Greer, A Homemade Year: The Blessings of Cooking, Crafting, and Coming Together
December Calendar

3rd - Breaking Bread, 6:00 pm, Jack's Restaurant, Rapid River
5th - UP Wildchurch, 5:30 - 8:30 pm, St. Paul's, Mqt
6th/7th - Taking the Pulse, Marquette
12th - Diocesan Christmas Party, 5:30 - 8:00 pm, St. Paul's, Mqt
24th - Christmas Eve services across the Diocese
25th - Merry Christmas!

Cross Roads

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